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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DIALECTICAL DISCOURSES: A STUDY OF JOHN LE CARRÉ

BY

ANTHONY CAMPBELL

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
SPRING 1991

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DATE: December 17th, 1990

I will advise you where to plant yourselves,
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' th' times . . .

Macbeth

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THE UNDERSIGNED CERTIFY THAT THEY HAVE READ, AND RECOMMEND TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH FOR ACCEPTANCE, A THESIS ENTITLED DIALECTICAL DISCOURSES: A STUDY OF LE CARRÉ'S NARRATIVE METHODS SUBMITTED BY ANTHONY CAMPBELL IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

DOCTOR R.H. SOLOMON

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FOR MY FAMILY AND FOR FRENCHIE

ABSTRACT

In Western culture deceit and betrayal go as far back as the serpent and the cross. Tales of espionage are not new, and our understanding of the role of the agent has continued to shift ever since biblical artists and historians wrote of Judas' kiss. John le Carré's novels present us with the dilemma of considering the ideology that informs the actions and motivation for agents who are not so divinely or demonically inspired. Through his works questions arise regarding the propriety of defending morals and ethics -- ideals -- through amoral, immoral, or unethical means. Le Carre's fictional speaker, George Smiley, sums up the quandry facing the spy: "*to be inhuman in defense of our humanity . . . harsh in defense of compassion*" (HS 460). The issue might be considered as an insolvable dialectic where human ideals and actions collide without reaching a final synthesis. Le Carre's manner of telling the story, his particular modes of discourse, realise the contradiction between our inhuman and humane natures beautifully. This thesis shall attempt to discover some of the ways by which le Carré effectively illustrates our ultimate uncertainty concerning the value of our deeds and our words.

PREFACE

For the sake of convenience and simplicity the titles of le Carré's novels have been abbreviated in the following manner:

CD	*Call for the Dead*
MQ	*A Murder of Quality*
SW	*The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*
LW	*The Looking-Glass War*
ST	*A Small Town in Germany*
NS	*The Naïve and Sentimental Lover*
TT	*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*
HS	*The Honourable Schoolboy*
SP	*Smiley's People*
DG	*The Little Drummer Girl*
PS	*A Perfect Spy*
RH	*The Russia House*

Any italics within a quotation are those of the author

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The novels of John le Carré hold a peculiar place in modern fiction; they are, at once, products of the publishing industry's best-seller apparatus, evidence of the infectious appeal of the spy story, and works that increasingly elicit attention from academic circles. Critics and reviewers have often recognized John le Carré to be somewhat enigmatic because he remains a "serious" writer working in a popular genre. Such recognition arises from his unique treatment of the techniques and *topoi* found in the espionage thriller, a treatment that raises the genre above the level of craftmanship, placing it in the realm of artistry.

Le Carré differs from many other writers of the form through his presentation of the agencies for which his agents perform their tasks. It is not uncommon, outside of le Carré, to find competing agencies represented as diametrically opposed moral forces. Shades of grey may be used to describe the colour of a character's eyes, but not his outlook and certainly not his Firm's perspective; hence agents and agencies exist in a fundamentally

static condition of binary opposition. The good agent fights the bad in much the same manner that the Redcross Knight battles the dragon, and the good agency carries with it all of the moral propriety and righteousness needed to gain a sense of irreproachable justification, defending its own acts of betrayal and deceit. Le Carré's world, in contrast, accentuates the dialetical ambiguity inherent in every nation-state's socio-political ideology, as all commitments to ideology transfigure the content to hold the form. Invariably, and ironically, each system of belief finds the trans-gression of its moral and ethical code necessary to guard against significant challenges to its position, and to its very existence. The system's preservation gains priority over the very principles which give the ideological complex its shape. Thus tenets like "one must love one's enemies" have been protected to the ultimate degree where perceived threats of "nonbelievers" are met with extreme predjudice. In the le Carréan universe one finds no monolithic world order or Manichean opposites; there is, in the place of ultimate truth and eternal opposition, the paradox that in upholding a hierarchy of values one must overturn its underpinnings, there is the notion that contrasting ideologies and final truths remain relative constructs of a subjective vision,

and consequently there is a continual questioning and scrutinizing of relativity, that is, of one's perspective.

Because le Carré places his characters on such uncertain moral ground each of their actions and, in the larger sense, each quest is undertaken with an eye not solely on its end, but on the means to the end as well. In many ways spies have become the modern day equivalent of the archetypal hero: selfless individuals, called or cajoled into service, who seek out knowledge, overcome various obstacles and heroically endeavor to return an ultimate boon, a Promethean illumination, benefitting all of society. Traditionally, obstacles hold significance primarily as agents or elements that hinder the process and verify the worthiness of the quest. The killing of St. George's dragon prompts no questions regarding George's saintly virtue or the supremacy of his goal; rather, it validates both. But in the situation of George Smiley and Company every act of violence, and each attempt to "overcome" the enemies in hopes of securing a nameless victory, demands some degree of inspection. Le Carré's novels invite the reader's questioning of procedures and actions. They demand it. His readers are continually asked to consider the price of the prize. Are personal betrayals merely a moral adjunct in the light of civil loyalties? To what degree of contradiction

can one remain assured of ably justifying the end by the means? Le Carré partially finds an answer in Goethe: repeatedly there is the phrase or at least the sentiment that "in the beginning was the deed" (the spy's edict). Ideals are often weighed and found wanting in the pragmatic world of the spy. One cannot merely believe without taking action. One must effectively work to bring on needed ideological change or retrenchment. Yet, again, we are faced with the paradox of choosing unethical actions to support a code of ethics: must all murderers be put to death? Ultimately, le Carré's readers must pick their way through a moral minefield, carefully avoiding both the traps of acting without thinking and thinking without acting. The dilemma can be understood as our inability to hold a dual perspective and the challenge is to see the requirement of both sides of the dialectic, and to strive to affect a marriage between human feeling and cold reason.

Le Carré's use of the cold war theatre as the setting for most of his novels facilitates a popular tradition of the genre, granting his readers access to the largely imaginary world of international political intrigue; yet the extraordinary nature of characters and events persistent in conventional spy fiction is displaced in le Carré's works. His secret agents possess no more special

qualities than are typically human. Each is inherently prone to failure. The gilded glamor of espionage work informing the action of so many thrillers is consciously dulled throughout le Carré's novels. The act of "the chase" in conventional espionage fiction finds no real equivalent act in le Carré. Often the most detailed actions found in le Carré hold more in common with Beckett's waiting games than with James Bond's flights of fancy. Detailed acts of violence and erotica are avoided, perhaps to a conspicuous degree. The reader's vicarious journey running through so many hoops and barrels common to the generic thriller is largely nonexistent in le Carré, or it is subtly altered to the extent that the reader's shared experience with a character (or characters) is maintained largely through engaging in a similar process of interpretation, whether that be of a glance, a conversation or a murder. Interpretation is primary and action is, at best, secondary.

Le Carré prompts his readers' interest through their need for knowledge, playing on their desire to construct order and meaning from the text. Readers are often driven onward by the idea that some ascertainable truth might await them, if only they are able to delve into the meaning of the cryptic conversations shared by the initiate. Repeatedly, his narrative's main line is

interrupted by conversations (and/or interrogations) which reconstruct a part of the story's anterior past, build upon the present action, and forebode possible futures. In much the same manner as the detective novel, le Carré's stories have readers following in the footsteps of an agent/detective who acts as a surrogate reader of the signs which readers also encounter, and often the most telling signifiers are found in conversation. The interview, passive or aggressive, often holds the key to unlocking an operation's meaning. But by listening to these conversations, we are most likely to find that doubt is the only certainty, and that a final meaning, or any set of signs which represent an ideal, is open to interpretation.

Perhaps more than any other writer in his field, le Carré uses interrogation as a narrative device. The interrogative tone is tacitly evident in lunch-counter conversations and reaches its highest pitch during friendly or unfriendly debriefings, reading like inquisitions, or confessions and acts of atonement. These various discourses lead us by degrees to discover what motivation or logic underlies the act precipitating our intrigue. But as we attempt to fit each conversation together, like parts of a puzzle, we face questions of authenticity, relevancy, and red herrings. The narra-

tive vignettes which make up the responses to investigative queries are usually one person's interpretation of a small part of a much larger action; often they lack integrity, contradict other reports, and are not easily reconciled with the reading audience's somewhat more objective point of view. Thus le Carré offers us versions of a tale, matrix chronicles, not a testament "recollected in tranquility" for general enlightenment. History is relegated to the status of conjecture. It must be weighed for motive, objectivity, and relative accuracy. The accounts related through conversations or interrogations are offered largely as versions of history -- as *histoires* -- facts and fictions surrendered in the cold light of in coercion, out of the shade of guilt, which echo the thematic attention given to the complex questions of moral nebulousness.

The focus upon detection in le Carré extends beyond that of the detective-style investigation. Many of his novels require us to partake in an internal critical inquiry. We encounter the spy as a creative artist and must attempt to distinguish the construction of the agent's or agency's mimesis within a novel's diegesis. Just as the discourse offered in interrogation requires our close reading so, too, does the spy's or the espionage community's more creative acts require our

critical efforts. Inside the fictional world of the novels we encounter a second (and sometimes a third) fiction -- "the theatre of the real" in *DG*, Pym's *bildungsroman* in *PS*, and Bluebird's polemical text in *RH* -- inciting our interpretative abilities. In each case le Carré controls our perspective, granting us a closely or distantly focused lens through which to view the interior fiction. *A Perfect Spy*'s perspective shifts from Pym's personal epistolary confession to views marked by an ignorance or opposition to Pym's perspective. The degree of shifting incites the readers' attempts to decide which position, if any, should hold sway. Ultimately, readers are faced with the problem of acknowledging a hermeneutical gap. We question Pym's sanity, Brotherhood's and Mary's impotent or innocent knowledge, and the Cousins' technically wrought assurances of guilt. With each shift in perspective our response to the discourse wavers between extreme doubt and utter certainty, and with each refocus our awareness of *PS*'s manifold fictive structures increases to the extent that the means of knowing the facts of the story is given an equal or greater emphasis than the facts themselves.

Bluebird's text, in contrast to Magnus' opus, remains outside our field of knowledge. By maintaining

an unbridgeable distance between his interior author and his actual audience le Carré makes us join Palfrey in the hunt for meaning. Our less than insightful position leads us to construct Bluebird's meanings and to infer motivation. Yet as we join with the members of the Russia House and their American counterparts in an effort to finally understand the value and limits of this source, our desire to possess knowledge is turned on itself, becoming the need to question methods and the intent of knowing.

In *The Little Drummer Girl* we find ourselves back stage in the cold war theatre. Narrative agents exist in a state of dress and undress: of becoming. They first appear as one character but soon change their name, nationality, and point of view. Like one of Pirandello's authorless characters, Charlie confronts the problems of multiple realities and divergent truths that materialize and dissolve with each personality change. And we, like Charlie, are asked to try on the different masks of relative truth, taking on the Israeli, Palestinian, and various European perspectives. No one position is privileged over the others. Each world view is shown to be a reductive and fissured part of an indefinable whole. Le Carré's metaphorical "theatre of the real" dramatizes the quest for indelible truths in a world where certainty

is only fiction.

The model for Kurtz's theatre might be traced to le Carré's first novel, *A Call for the Dead*, where we find George Smiley employed at the Circus. In the world of the Circus the latest version of reality becomes the newest illusion. Truth is set in inverted commas (or simply inverted), and dissemblance marks a normative course of events. Tradecraft determines one's actions and true identities become lost under skins of codenames, fictitious careers and false relationships. The Circus society is a carnival confederacy where subterfuge and conjuring acts prosper with only a slight degree of impugnment and where open communication encounters ironclad scepticism. But unlike the Brechtian alienation effect manifested in *The Little Dummer Girl* and its Theatre of the Real, le Carré usually frames Circus life with an insidious perspective, whereby his audience at first accepts such a state as a preordained, or even vital proviso in the defense of social order -- "how else could one protect a free society?"

The inherent duplicity of codenames and tradecraft originally valorizes the indefensible acts of violence and betrayal. In the beginning we have little disdain for a "stick and carrot job" because the phrase seems to echo the sagacious wisdom and righteousness accorded saws

and proverbs. But through increasingly acute revelations, le Carré undercuts the authority readers innocently offer the Circus' defenders of the faith and their cant. In realizing the term's actual context, or more precisely the act's, and acknowledging its baldfaced translation is "the simultaneous use of threats and bribes" (Monaghan, *Smiley's Circus* 174) we then recognize the dialect of deceit at work (or at play). Accordingly, our previous trust in the validity of Circus actions and words fades into grey questioning. Le Carré uses the espiocrat's jargon and intricate tradecraft, in part, to affect our suspension of disbelief: the terminology and codes of behavior serve in making the Circus a more probable, a more possible, world. Yet, in contrast, because such efforts and terms invariably contains some ulterior significance (usually bad) our initial acceptance of such a world is replaced with an increasing scepticism, requiring our continual questioning and constant reappraisal of Circus life.

Le Carré's portraits of "life in the cold" and officialdom's secret society function most aptly to question language's truth and the possible interpretations of an action. Throughout this study I shall explore the narrative means by which such questioning is accomplished.

The first chapter demonstrates how le Carré's divergence from the techniques of the generic spy thriller brings the interpretive act into relief, and drastically undermines the attention often given to the vicarious adventures common to the genre. My second chapter deals with his use of interrogations and conversations as narrative devices that incite readers to an act of self-reflection, questioning the value, process, and limitations of both narrative and readership. My following chapter is an expansion of the discussion on technique in chapter two. It will focus on the complex interior fictions le Carré uses such as Bluebird's manuscript and Kurtz's theatre, and look at how such metafictional narrative removes function as an impetus for our questions of interpretation. The final chapter considers the espionage communities' use of behavior and word codes. I explore how le Carréan codes and tradecraft undermine his audience's armchair objectivity, bringing us into an authenticated fictional world, but simultaneously drawing attention to our position outside the Circus world, and furthermore, increasingly manifesting how the espiocrat's language and actions illustrate the insidious duplicity of of his ideology and society. I hope that each aspect of this study will

engender more questions than it answers, prompting questions of the tacit assumptions effecting methods of critical discourse and inciting us to consider intently the mandates and responsibilities directing "intelligence communities," whether they be those of governments, media services or, even, academic organizations.

Determining what sets le Carré apart from other writers of the spy thriller depends upon being able to decide what exactly constitutes the limits of this genre. Entries in the field might range from Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Maugham's stories of Ashenden, and a number of Graham Greene's works, to Ian Fleming's adventures of 007 and the various offerings of Spy meisters Frederick Forsyth, Len Deighton, and Tom Clancy. No list, it seems, would suffice in accounting for all the forms within the form. Indeed, even *Hamlet* with its webs of deceit and suspicion has been interpreted as an early example of the espionage community (Steele, *Lord Hamlet's Castle*), but comparing le Carré with Shakespeare leaves us somewhat in the cold. They are too greatly separated by historical and artistic differences (drama/novel). Hence, in considering what sets le Carré apart from other practitioners of the genre we do best to compare him with writers who share his form: the novel, in its mid-to-late twentieth century manifestation; his subject matter,

loosely defined as the European communities' cold war games; and, consequently, those events which take up most of the main action of the novels, such as planting or uncovering an agent, or controlling the movement of an object (whether that object be, for example, a top scientist, the scientist's secret formula or the rocket fuel made from the formula). Such restrictions are inevitably limiting and artificial, but they help in establishing le Carré's distinctness among espionage writers of his literary generation.

The argument has often been made that le Carré's novels were written as a corrective to the consumer-goods hero exploits of James Bond. The truth of this argument is open to question, but nevertheless, by the time of *A Call for the Dead*'s publication in 1961, Ian Fleming's novels chronicling the adventures of James Bond had given shape to the general perception of spy thrillers. Critics had given Conrad cover in the Canon, and both Greene and Maugham were following in his footsteps. Works that Greene had once called "entertainments" were being reinterpreted in the light of literature; *The Confidential Agent*, *The Quiet American*, and *Our Man in Havana*, among others, had become more novel and less thriller. Similarly, Somerset Maugham's tales of Ashenden are viewed as popular stories distinguished by

their literary craftsmanship. Maugham has not received a critical reception like Greene, but his works are valued for their qualities of social satire and ironical detachment. Ian Fleming, on the other hand, has not yet received an associate membership in the Great Tradition; thus his Sir James remains in the realm of the thriller.

Bond is the gentleman spy, a *parfait gentil knight* of post-war Britain. He possesses both an unquestioned understanding of good and bad -- whether the topic be imperialism or champagne -- and a license to kill, but he performs as a spy only in a nominal sense. He is an adventurer by trade, one who foils monstrous criminals (by killing them in highly contrived circumstances that require an incredible reversal of fortune and some Spenserian poetic justice) and rescues mistreated maidens, albeit, only to lose them eventually, after an episode or two of coldly passionate requital. This man of adventure, furthermore, has little cause and less time to verify sources or check information, a task not uncommon to the job descriptions of most spies. In Bond's universe, intelligence gathering is the work of the mere deskman.

Bond's character is defined by performance, a definition which absolves him from the mundane task of gathering information. His job calls for only the

machine-like ability to follow orders. He is not required to think, just act. In fact, Bond's role might be best described as that of a human machine. Satisfaction arrives from his perfect execution of the assigned task. "Bond ceases to be a subject for psychiatry and remains at the most a physiological object . . . , a magnificent machine, as the author and the public . . . wish" (Eco 145).

Most intelligence gathering, if not done by helpers like his task-Master M, happens during one of 007's serendipitous moments of eavesdropping:

> [Bond] heard his own death sentence pronounced, the in-involvement of the KGB with Scaramanga and the Caribbean spelled out, and such minor dividends as sabotage of the bauxite industry, massive drug smuggling into the States and gambling politics thrown in. It was a majestic haul in area intelligence.
>
> (*The Man With the Golden Gun* 178)

Fleming avoids wearying us with the lengthy accounts of investigation. Aside from the opportune discovery, there remains one other conventional device by which Bond becomes informed: the villain's exuberant confession. At a novel's nadir Bond is often captured, tortured, and humiliated, then like clockwork the seemingly victorious

villain, unable to contain himself, gleefully reveals to Bond his plan for world domination.

> "There is a million dollars' worth of equipment up above us . . . Mister Bond . . . . From time to time a rocket soars up on its way a hundred, five hundred miles into the Atlantic. And we track it, as accurately as they are tracking it . . . . Then suddenly, our pulses go out to the rocket . . . it destroys itself. . . ." Doctor No paused. "Do you not find this interesting, Mister Bond?" . . . Well, well! Now the pieces in the puzzle fell into place. . . . Of course Doctor No would have to kill him and the girl. (Fleming, *Dr No* 194-5)

Bond, the captive audience and the machine, has little choice but to listen and act against such plans. In Bond's world action is primary, and interpretive or investigative acts are at best negligible.

From beginning to end Bond personifies one aspect of the spy in spy novels. He does not interpret information or action, he acts; in le Carréan terms he is Goethe's "deed" incarnate. 007 lives for the chase, for the gun play, and for the girl, existing for no greater reason than to alleviate boredom:

> In his particular line of business, peace had reigned for nearly a year. And peace was killing him.
>
> At 7:30 on the morning of Thursday, August 12th, Bond awoke in his comfortable flat disgusted to find that he was thoroughly bored with the prospect of the day ahead. Just as, in at least one religion, accidie is the first of the cardinal sins, so boredom, and particularly the circumstance of waking up bored, was the only vice Bond utterly condemned. (*From Russia, With Love* 121)

The notion of détente brings on Bond's ennui. His role demands action. Whenever the status of Western society is threatened by a foreign culture (or a criminal subculture) then Bond provides an heroic service, but if distinct societies can co-exist peacefully then Bond fulfills no useful role. In times of peace his acts of of murder, destruction, and seduction are not valorous, they are criminal. It is essential, therefore, that Fleming charges the atmosphere of Bond's world with conspiracy, allowing Bond to act against surreptitious hostile forces. But by depending upon conspiracy to fuel the action, Fleming inevitably lends James Bond a world

view -- an ideology -- informed by jingoistic paranoia. "To the paranoic, a paranoid representation of reality is of course perfectly rational, and if you happen to believe in conspiracies and the necessity for crushing them by any means necessary, then everything in the thriller follows naturally" (Palmer 87). But, of course, very little that 007 does is ordinary. Murder and mayhem pass beyond the province of the Public Works department. Bond is in a bind: he must perform ultra-heroically and he must appear to be acting appropriately, yet he cannot take more than a moment (if that) to justify his actions by thinking upon such acts and their rippling consequences. Thus, Fleming's novels must somehow attempt to reveal Bond's surreal exploits as heroic and also as the most realistic and natural course of events.

There are two methods by which Fleming endeavors to convince us of his tales' authenticity, or the narrative authority: both hyperrealism and minutia abound throughout the novels. An excerpt from *Live and Let Die* illustrates his use of both techniques:

> The afternoon before he had to submit to a certain degree of Americanization at the hands of the FBI . . . . . He had to accept half a dozen unusually patterned foulard ties, dark socks with

> fancy clocks, two or three "display handkerchiefs" for his breast pocket, nylon vests and pants (called T-shirts and shorts), a comfortable lightweight camel-hair overcoat with over-buttressed shoulders, a plain grey snap-brim Fedora with a thin black ribbon and two pairs of hand-stiched and very comfortable black moccasin "casuals."
>
> He also required a "Swank" tie clip . . . an alligator-skin billfold from Mark Cross, a plain Zippo lighter, a plastic "Travel-Pak," . . . and, finally, a lightweight Hartmann "Skymate" suitcase. (28)

By using such descriptions Fleming makes Bond's adventures seem just slightly more plausible. He creates a greater "suspension of disbelief" when his extraordinary agent uses a brand name lighter and toothbrush. And the precise details, often describing actions and objects of everyday life, from underwear, to anti-perspirant, to American street signs, and games of bridge, also help locate James in the everyday world. "It is this compulsive detail . . . that accounts for the fascination Fleming exerted on his readers. Along with the incredibility of the action went the heightened credibility of the detail" (Atkins 75). Fleming uses a Victorian narrative convention to realize his world of

Britannic ideals. Fleming often writes of "Victorian luxury" in reference to Bond's world, and he incorporates these Dickensian details to validate both its materialism and Bond's damn the torpedoes defense of it.

Fleming's imitation of life might be less offensive if his narrative voice was less adamant in assuring us of its authority. As it is, his readers become just another part of the narrative machinery. Like Bond, we are required to perform a mechanistic task. We take on the perspective of a consumer goods connoisseur whose snobbish discretion informs the better part of his valour (Fleming uses third person but there is hardly a scene where Bond is absent and he often presents Bond's interpretation of events as the narrator's). We see that Bond drives a Bentley, drinks Russian vodka and smokes hand-rolled cigarettes. We view the exquisite details of his exploits. And throughout all of this, as if it is a message from Madison Avenue, we are encouraged to realize that using the right product leads us to doing the right thing, and that we, being products of the right society, have little need to think why this is so -- just that it is. We are not required to question actions or underlying motives. We need not bring much imagination or many interpretative skills to Bond. We need only bring a Harrods catalogue.

Fleming's contribution to spy fiction is addressed here largely because it epitomizes and influences a trend still flourishing in spy thrillers. Aside from le Carré, nearly all espionage writers working under the shadow of Fleming have opted to validate their stories with similar narrative methods. Even those who have attempted to remove themselves as much as possible from Fleming's imperialist perspective have chosen to establish their narratives with kitsch (peculiar to agents) and, instead of Fleming's brand name realism, they have adopted a perspective framed by a degree of naturalism. As in Fleming's novels, the readers' role amounts to little more than that of riders on a rollercoaster: we just sit back and enjoy the ride with our interpretative eyes tightly shut.

Len Deighton is a writer, like le Carré, whose early novels are considered to be a response to the Bond stories. This might be a less contentious claim than any made for le Carré, because Deighton at least responds to Fleming with a reciprocal narrative voice. Deighton does not describe the piston's firing order of a 4.5 litre Bentley or the various methods by which impurities are extracted from Stolichnaya vodka because his hero takes a taxi or the underground to work and drinks out of a paper cup; but nevertheless, he does use narrative methods

similar to Fleming's. He merely speaks with a working class dialect. Deighton's hero (who shall remain nameless throughout the first five novels) is not of the upper class. He is James Bond's opposite number from the rank and file department. Thus details pervading Deighton's work might concern bus transfers rather than cockpit instrumentation, and issues like back pay instead of illuminations upon South Africa's diamond trade.

To the popular press Deighton was a welcome respite from the fantasies of Fleming; *The Guardian* speaks of his "sheer sense of the actual," other papers insist on his "credibility" and "convincing detail." Such responses came not merely from the inclusion of a few more matchbooks or a few less Zippo lighters. Deighton's early novels also give a greater role to information and intelligence material. His first novel, *The Ipcress File*, contains a mock diagram of a secret file on its first page. At the end of his first four novels there are appendices, delineating everything from Soviet military districts, and the handling of unfamiliar pistols, to a recipe for Manhattan Project cocktails (*The Ipcress File*, *Billion Dollar Brain*). Within the texts there are texts. Office files and transcripts of confidential conversations attest to an attempt at

verbatim verisimilitude. For a finishing touch the early novels are spotted through with footnotes that, explain like biblical glosses the cant for the laity, or at least point them to the proper appendix.

Deighton does well to translate Fleming's high mass from Bond street Latin to Soho English, but he still asks that we believe in miracles. His hero, like Bond, continually uncovers global plots, conspiracies that threaten the status quo (ironically, this is the same status quo he incessantly vilifies with biting sarcasm). We find the same gun play, gadgetry, and girl trouble as in Fleming, and, again, few questions arise when it comes to justifying acts of murder or betrayal entrenching his "God save the civil servant" ideology. His hero may be a lover, a fighter, and a plebeian, but he is not a thinker nor are we encouraged to do much thinking for him or ourselves.

Deighton further controls our reading through his use of the first person narrative. The point of view that is quite strongly implied in the Bond novels takes over in Deighton. His anonymous hero is the teller of the tale. Because we view the world solely through his eyes, our objectivity becomes greatly diminished. Unless we are given an adequate reason to doubt the narrator, then we should believe that what he states is

true. In 1987, Grafton Books announced a Silver Jubilee Edition of Deighton's novels, to commemorate *The Ipcress File*'s first publication; these editions are prefaced with notes from the author. In his preface to *Billion Dollar Brain* Deighton refutes the notion that his first person narrative preordains our interpretation or encroaches upon our objectivity:

> The reader was not supposed to believe everything this first person narrative said, the reader was expected to judge it to some extent, as we judge our friends when talking to us. I had started writing *The Ipcress File* with this idea and all the similar books after it employ the same device, and demand the same interpretation from the reader. (vii)

Deighton's intentions may be sincere -- his narrator often jumps to conclusions and tends to exaggerate. But if we judge the tale "as we judge the veracity of our friends," then we must consider what sort of "friends" support their conversation with footnotes, files, and assorted appendices. Deighton's statement of intent is clearly confuted through his own narrative methods. He wants to have his cake and eat his file too and thus "demand . . . interpretation from the reader." But the

best he can manage is our compliance. Deighton's overly directed narrative methods offer us no real impetus to interpret this world. With his reverential reflection of Fleming's narrative means he asks only that we experience the story without taking our queries beyond an appendix's remove.

Frederick Forsyth and Tom Clancy manifest perhaps the ultimateexpression of Fleming's well-worked idea of making the implausible action of the spy thriller somewhat more plausible with what John Atkins calls "the heightened credibility of the detail" (75). Forsyth pushes the thriller in the direction of the historical novel. Leroy Panek states: "he is the first major contemporary spy writer to mine history for his material." He leaves behind Doctor No's underwater laboratories and enters the "real" arena of political assassinations and coup d'états. "The historical atmosphere makes readers accept Forsyth's premises and once they do this, they become easy prey to his orchestration of conventional thriller technology" (273-76).

As Panek's last statement implies, Forsyth's aim is not much different than Fleming's; he simply realizes that each generation of thriller writers must create a better rollercoaster, and to this end history becomes his handmaiden. *The Day of the Jackal* recalls the Kennedy

assassinations (set in 1963) and uses an historical figure as the target, de Gaulle, to plant its fantastical plot in firm ground. Forsyth also continually, though tacitly, stresses history's importance within the narrative itself:

> During the second half of June and the whole of July in 1963 France was rocked by an outbreak of violent crime. (65)
>
> In the last week of June a report landed on the desk of General Guibaud. (67)
>
> . . . the Jackal spent the last fortnight of June and the first two weeks of July in carefully controlled and planned activity. (68)

Here Forsyth uses the thriller's conventional "ticking time-bomb," or race against time, in temporal structuring to create suspense and realism. We are effectively reading an historically founded journal specifically tapered for the villain and the hero, and we, consequently, bring no more interpretative skills to *Jackal* than we would bring to our reading of a newspaper.

Another aspect of the thriller which Forsyth brought to the fore is the notion that spy figures are all highly professional. Ambler's and Buchan's amateurs would not survive in the increasingly dangerous world of interna-

tional espionage; moreover, these amateurs could not be accepted by readers. We must believe that the agent possesses the special capabilities and knowledge which allows him to save the world in such an extraordinary manner. He can no longer just stumble across salvation. Forsyth's people are experts at changing appearances and delivering the coup de grâce, and he makes certain that we understand this fact. In describing the Jackal's metamorphoses from the fictitious Alex Duggan to the false Pastor Per Jensen of Copenhagen, he writes of clothes labels being changed and the extra baggage of "the Danish book on French Cathedrals" (196). Bruce Merry recognizes Forsyth's "consise and professional" (59) descriptions in the acts of murder:

> The back-handed blow across the side of the neck into the cartoid artery choked off the scream at source. (*Jackal*, 325)
>
> And the crash of the bunched knuckles under the mastoid bone on the right of her head just behind the ear was completely unexpected. (*Ibid* 371)
>
> The slug from the rifle tore into his chest, struck the sternum and exploded. (*ibid.* 380)

With the precision of an autopsy report, Fosyth's

descriptions of violence re-emphasise his characters' degree of professsionalism. Violence, documents, disguises and various other mechanical procedures are described with incredible detail, but he avoids describing professional motivation. We find no investigative foray, no analysis, as to why the Jackal must kill de Gaulle or why Lebel, the detective, must stop him. Thus although Forsyth's characters might act professionally, they practice the same unquestioning philosophy informing the actions of amateurs: kill or be killed.

The physiological descriptions of Forsyth find a match in Tom Clancy. Clancy's novels have been dubbed "techno-thrillers." *The Hunt for Red October*, *Red Storm Rising*, and *Clear and Present Danger* all possess an abundance of technical terms to help authorize the novels' action. Helicopters, missles, tracking devices, and even office equipment (*Clear and Present Danger* 1) seem to be the true heroes of Clancy's novels. Clancy writes of "America's traditional fascination with equipment and firepower" (*CPD* 35), and he capitalizes on this fascination by making it the mainstay of his plots. Fleming's brand name descriptions -- which never went far beyond 007's Walther PPK and .25 caliber Beretta in terms of weaponry -- are newly adapted by Clancy in this area to evoke a sense of realism and professionalism through-

out his stories:

> He'd taken off from Eglin Air Force Base . . . topped off his fuel from a KC-135 tanker, and now he had enough JP-5 aboard to fly for five hours . . . . Fast-pack conformal fuel cells were attached along the sides of his aircraft . . . the F-15. (*CPD* 150)

Clancy here exchanges Fleming's Madison Avenue address with one from the Pentagon and its manufacturers of war machines. His characters, moreover, are not merely machine-like, they have actually become part of their machines. Pilots and planes share a symbiotic relationship: "his airplane was as natural a part of the young man as the muscles in his arm" (*CPD* 150). Clancy's machines provide and evaluate errorless intelligence (satellites, thermal-optics, radar, video-tape, and polygraphs replace mere deskmen). Machines and technology justify the manifest-destiny actions for Clancy's heroes. His heroes need not think, they just need to produce an errorless and machine-like response. And readers do not question such responses unless they heretically question the authority of technology.

The central problem facing all authors of the spy novel remains that of belief. "The gap between reality

and the effort demanded of the imagination is the widest in literature, except in the case of science fiction" (Merry 47). Authors from Fleming to Clancy have recognized this problem and have dealt with it in basically the same way. In each case the author creates a narrative voice which cannot be questioned. Narrative authority gains ascendancy over any judgement made by readers. We either play by the rules as circumscribed by an absolute narrative or we simply do not play the game. We can doubt neither Clancy's computers, Forsyth's history, Deighton's first person, or Fleming's details; in each case one hegemonious voice carries high above others, and it sanctions both the novel's actions and our interpretation.

Le Carré declines from ascribing such overwhelming authority to his narrative voice. His approach to affecting reality in his novels is effectively the opposite of Fleming *et alii*. Instead of presenting a unified and self-assured voice, le Carré's narratives often echo doubt and speak in many tongues. J. Cawelti identifies one aspect of this quality in *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*: "one of his most interesting innovations is a narrative point of view which might be best described as 'rumour.' The first part of chapter 3 . . . is an excellent illustration" (168). What Cawelti calls the

"rumour" perspective is something that le Carré develops throughout his novels with increasing complexity. In his second novel, *A Murder of Quality*, George Smiley takes the train out to Carne to investigate a murder. En route Smiley reads the various reports of the murder presented in the morning papers. No journal is given priority over the others. Each one relates a version of the truth, inadvertently promoting some inaccuracy; in short each one offers speculation. Cawelti might have chosen this line from *The Spy Who* to make his point: "some said he had made a mistake in Berlin, and that was why his networks had been rolled up; no one quite knew" (*SW* 25). *The Honourable Schoolboy* opens with a threefold variation of le Carré's "rumour" narrative. First "London's secret servants" disagree "about where the Dolphin case history should really begin" (*HS* 3); then foreign correspondents in Hong Kong muse on the reasons for High Haven's closing, and finally the Tuscan villagers, reading Westerby's mail, struggle to fathom its meaning "till at last, step by step, the code was broken and the story out" (*HS* 28), but still they continue their guessing games: "what were the schoolboy's circumstances?" "Who was he, what had he done with his youth?" (*HS* 31). The singular voice of narrative authority is divested in le Carré and replaced by a chordal mode. His rumour narratives bring the

interpretative act into relief and increase the readers' role from that of merely recognizing what is happening to that of more actively investigating and questioning the happenings in the novels.

Another important example of this manifold perspective comes in the opening pages of *The Little Drummer Girl*. Here le Carré presents a bomb explosion, but he undermines the spy genre's conventional attentiveness to gunpowder action by instead focusing on acts of interpretation. Both descriptions and interpretations are spatially and temporally arranged: "several defunct wristwatches, the property of victims, confirmed the time [of explosion]" (*DG* 3), survivors in the area "remembered the tinkling of falling glass . . . . And the mewing of people too frightened to scream" (*DG* 5). Then the press enters the scene, "straining at the cordons." The "first enthusiastic reports killed eight . . . wounded thirty and laid the blame . . . . By midday the press had been forced to scale their bag down to five dead" (*DG* 5). Finally, "by early afternoon a six man team of Israeli experts had flown in from Tel-Aviv" (*DG* 6). As we move away from the epicentre in time and space, we witness the evaporation of clear cut assurances. Only the victims' corroborative watches grant us much certainty. The late introduction of "experts" to the scene gives us no

reason to think that a single truth shall be divined; rather, it reinforces the developing notion that truth's authoritative version will be presented in various theories but in theory only; as Goethe says: "dear friend, all theory is grey" (78).

Where many spy writers might focus on the explosion with a preponderance of accurate active descriptions of largely insignificant details to affect the reality of such destruction, le Carré leads us away from the bomb site to such an extent that we nearly forget about it. In le Carré an action of such magnitude requires investigation and it is to the investigative process that our aattention is soon drawn and held. Action begets not thrills but consequences. And they become our concern. From the outset of le Carré's novels his narrative strategies effectively ask that we consider the consequences of the deed.

Perhaps the clearest manifestation of le Carré's narrative methods exists in the character of George Smiley. As Bond is to Fleming so Smiley is to le Carré. From the first novel where we find the Fennan mystery pre-empted by "A Brief History of George Smiley" to his final appearance in *Smiley's People*, Smiley stands as a reference point from which we might gauge actions. Through Smiley's eyes le Carré incites us to consider

spying's inherent dilemma: one's grave and constant convictions must be suspended in order to support them. The whole of Smiley's character, from his physical appearance to his mental outlook, promotes our consideration of this paradox. In *A Call for the Dead*, Smiley is described as one who is "without school, parents, regiment or trade, without wealth or poverty, . . . [and] without labels" (7). George Smiley shuns definition. If he represents anything it is the necessity of manifold contradictions, he is something akin to the pluralism expressed through the voices of the rumour narratives. He is described as having "not *one* face at all actually . . . . More like your whole range of faces. More like your patchwork of of different ages, people, and endeavours. Even . . . of different faiths" (*SP* 40). As Smiley looks for the General's proofs on Hampstead Heath he occasions to give an internalized response to some graffiti. The remark further establishes his pluralistic perspective:

> Moral statements enlivened the flaking green paint: "Punk is destructive. Society does not need it." The assertion caused him a moment's indecision. "Oh but society *does*," he wanted to reply: "society is an association of minorities." (*SP* 88)

Smiley constantly endeavours to avoid the stranglehold of such "moral statements" by rejecting much of the self-righteousness which underlies such certainties and by attaching himself to the marginalized regions of society and the nebulous masses. To Fleming's corporate reincarnation of the Redcross knight we find an answer in George Smiley. He is le Carré's plastic Everyman.

Yet he is also defined by his individuality. He is perhaps as sharply defined as any fictional character in English literature. His love of German literature and philology, his deductive powers, and his idiosyncratic tendencies (like polishing his spectacles on the end of his tie) help define his unique nature. Peter Lewis says that "George Smiley is now as firmly established in the British national conscious as Sherlock Holmes (2), possessing a life of his own. His diffident calm, By-water address, and a habit of wearing poorly fitted clothing have become signs of identity likable to number 212 B, Baker street, a meerschaum pipe, and a deer-stalker cap. Smiley's character and circumstances have become so fully realized that David Monaghan makes a comparison between the world of Smiley and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County (*Smiley's Circus*, vii). In a world of duplicity and nebulous motivations Smiley stands apart

as an identifiable constant.

This sketch of Smiley as a definitive personality may seem at odds with the amorphous Everyman picture which le Carré suggests in calling him a "patchwork of of different ages, people, and endeavours" (*SP 40*). To understand Smiley and his outlook most fully we must reconcile these two divergent aspects of his personality. The two pictures, when laid upon each other, give us a composite drawing that better approximates a complete understanding of the character. Seen in this dual perspective, Smiley is a portrait of contradiction: his defined qualities reflect the need to search out and hold on to indelible certainties, yet his pluralism denotes a realization that such certainties do not exist in any palpable form. Thus le Carré delineates Smiley's character as a personification of the central quandary facing the agent; in Smiley we witness a man committed to naively humane principles who must come to terms with utterly ruthless machine he serves in the hopes of preserving his principles. As a narrative frame, therefore, Smiley approaches an ideal. He struggles to maintain the dialectic between justifying the ends through worthwhile and self-assured beliefs, yet he condemns the means required to meet such an end -- means that necessitate a denial of his hope and beliefs and,

all too often, those of others.

In addition to Smiley's particular characteristics mentioned above, there is one other which strongly emphasizes le Carré's divergence from the conventional spy narrative and the attention he places upon questioning certainties. Unlike Bond, Smiley most often works as a detective. He is never cast as the adventurer. The main action of le Carré's first two novels involves Smiley as detective solving a murder. In *Tinker Tailor* Smiley detects the agency's mole, and in *Smiley's People* he solves the riddle posed by Vladimir's murder. Smiley's detective work engages our desire to know what *has* happened rather than what *is* happening. It draws us from the action of the present, asking us to consider events of an alterior past. As with the bomb of *The Little Drummer Girl* the action occurs, in effect, off-stage. Smiley's job of understanding motive and consequence takes the spotlight. Through studying the the possible reasons -- the "why" -- he (and we) better understand the history of events. To reach such an understanding Smiley must often take on the various roles of the characters involved in the situation which he is attempting to solve. He continually must ask himself things like "why would Fennan kill himself" (*CD*), why did the General say "it concerned the Sandman" (*SP*), or

"why would Control act so covertly" (*TT*). Smiley tries to take on the other person's point of view, decentering his limited understanding with the desire to take on one that is more objective, more inclusive. As a detective, rather than an action man, he is partially able to do this. As readers, we are required to perform a similar task. Through Smiley we enter the story and, along with him, endeavour to interpret the motivations that lead to actions and, in turn, the consequences which spring from such acts.

Le Carré's novels all reiterate the notion that "spying is waiting." In this respect, spying is the painstakingly slow process of gathering information and the more difficult, or even impossible, job of adequately interpreting information. As opposed to Fleming and other contemporaries in this genre, le Carré does not vigorously strive to make us believe in his narrative through the use of explicit detail, of to forego an interpretation of the spy's action. He invites and even demands our questioning. In a letter to Richard Curle, Joseph Conrad states that "explicitness . . . is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion . . . Nothing is more clear than the utter insignificance of explicit statements and also its power to call attention away from

things that matter in the region of art" (112). Conrad's statement echoes a thought presented in *Heart of Darkness*: "meaning is to be found "outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze" (5). Such ideas illustrate le Carré's art of telling. His spies pursue information, they quest for a knowledge superior to their enemies'. This becomes their mandate and the one quality that might validate their existence, but le Carré usually depicts such quests as glamorous in the sense that they are delusively alluring. His narratives incite our questioning of the validity of an agent's or agency's operation. Through his telling art le Carré moves us to reject or at least to question any singular authority, and through George Smiley we are shown a world that requires a degree of steadfast openmindedness: to see the other in ourselves.

Interrogative practices perhaps more aptly define the generic role of the fictional detective rather than the spy but le Carré, throughout his works, shows the tendency to disregard his genre's narrative conventions for the most appropriate mode of telling. His novels are not easily catagorized as thrillers or spy novels or detective novels; boundaries overlap and distinct generic forms meld, creating a narrative that contributes to themes of dialectical questioning. Le Carré manipulates his narratives in a manner similar to John Barth, denying the rigorous authority of formula, favouring instead to create a suitably fissured discourse, one that allows him to turn each part of the story -- "the structure, the narrative viewpoint, the means of presentation, in some instances the process of composition and/or recitation as well as of reading or listening -- into dramatically relevant emblems of the theme" (Barth 222). In contrast with general conventions of the spy thriller le Carré assigns interrogations and interviews a significant role

in the shaping of his narratives and, to borrow John Barth's phrase, we should recognise that they often come to form "relevant emblems of the theme."

Le Carré's interrogations quite often reveal a narrative disjunction, dissolving the cast iron certainties and matter-of-fact guarantees often desired or inferred in the act of reading. Near the end of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, after the interrogation of Haydon and Haydon's subsequent murder, Smiley attempts defining Haydon's character. After struggling with all the irreconcilable parts of Haydon's character, he finally opts "for a picture of one of those wooden Russian dolls that open up, revealing one person inside the other, and another inside him" (*TT* 209). This metaphor of the *Matryoshka* doll also perfectly defines one manner in which interrogations are related: as stories unfold they reveal other tales and other truths hidden inside.

During his debriefing Ricki Tarr tells Guillam, Lacon, and Smiley of his findings while in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Guillam in his best "just the facts Ma'am" tone characterizes the desire for order and control, demanding that Tarr "keep it precise" (*TT* 29). Tarr tries to keep his account's particulars straight, offering days, dates, and places, and naming names as confirmation of his statement's truth. Yet regardless of such hard evidence,

at the core of Tarr's assertions lies someone else's narrative. Irina's confession is the first interior tale divulged from within Tarr's story: "she told me her whole life-story from birth" (*TT* 36). But all of Tarr's "just the facts" evidence fails to adequately uphold the hearsay, and with the introduction of the second generation of Irina's story -- the "diary" hidden in the church -- the narrative comes to us from one further and more questionable remove. Tarr's transcription of Irina's original text amounts to another skin of interior narrative, and furthermore, it illustrates the increasing distance we have come from the story's once convincing narrative. Le Carré ends his telescopic narrative only after we journey from the largely unquestioned limited omniscient point of view, "the figural narration" (Stanzel *passim*) which begins the novel, to the sixth-party hearsay, the "embedded narratives" (Martin 135), that have emanated from the corridors of Moscow central and are related to Irina by Ivlov.

A list of the more distinct narrative progressions helps to make the narrative transposition from the original third-person to Moscow centre's telling of "rumours" somewhat clearer:

1) Narrator of *Tinker Tailor's* main action:

Main action is related from the third-person, and is largely extra-diegetical. David Monaghan states that "the action . . . is presented by an external narrator who limits his potential omniscience so that for much of the time the reader sees the world from the point of view of one character, Smiley" (*The Art of Survival* 148-9). Unlike many of the "embedded narratives, in this narrative frame names have not been changed to protect the innocent; except for Prideaux who gets renamed "Rhino," Tarr is Tarr and Smiley remains Smiley, etcetera.

2) Ricki Tarr tells his audience of Kowloon and Boris: Tarr's is a first-person report of an extra-diegetical form that details the Boris' action. Ricki's account of his first few days watching Boris contains the first "*Matryoshka*" narrative, as Ricki becomes Mr. Thomas from Adelaide, Australia, complete with cover as a car salesman, and Tarr gives Boris the name "Mr. Hyde." Le Carré entwines the various thread of Tarr's storytelling with the novel's main narrative voice ("sure enough half an hour later his Mr. Hyde turned up"), and Tarr's report is occasionally qualified by Guillam's emendations and to a small degree by Smiley's questions.

3) Irina's oral reports (Tarr as interlocutor):

Irina's tale is told in both third and first-person (Ricki's Third-person narrative is occasionally supple-

mented with Irina's first-person untagged conversation). The focus remains extra-diegetical. In Irina's interpretation of events there is a slight alteration to the Mr. Thomas story; Tarr's alter-ego now becomes "Colonel Thomas," Irina's English gentleman -- "Hooray for English gentlemen" (*TT* 35). A number of Irina's statements are questioned by Tarr -- "who ever heard of Baptist Nuns?" (37), and some of her statements and actions are interpolated by Tarr. His inferences, in turn, are emended by Guillam and Smiley.

(4) Tarr copies the diary, leaving Irina's original manuscript in the dead letter box at the church:

The diary is usually presented through a first-person, intra-diegetical frame. Irina tells her story, but with the diary we encounter a question of textual authority; as Tarr only offers a copy of her manuscript and lies about the nature of his textual transmission. Ricki claims that "I made the translation myself" (*TT* 42), again Guillam corrects him, informing Smiley that Tarr "hasn't a word of Russian to his name. They spoke English all the time. Irina had done a three-year English course" (*TT* 43). Tarr further manipulates the interpretation by reading the diary aloud and abbreviating Irina's story. He excises what he calls "prayers and a bit of love talk" (*TT* 43); moreover, Tarr offers

his interpretation of Irina's psychological state, taking it upon himself to perform some unconfirmable handwriting analyses from the manu- script of Irina's diary (*TT* 45).

5) Tarr's copy of Irina's diary contains Irina's tale of Ivlov's report of Gerald the Mole and Karla: Irina's extra-diegetic, first-person report adds to the commentary of Guillam, Smiley, and Tarr. She remarks that gossip often stems from the "little fellows [who] like to make themselves grand by appearing to be in the know," and she quickly questions the source of Ivlov's secret knowledge: "I laughed and told him that no such records existed; it was an idea of dreamers" (43). As earlier Tarr had been Thomas, and Thomas, in turn, became Colonel Thomas, here the interior (or ulterior) nature of the narrative frame is reinforced by Ivlov who was Brod: "Thus Brod became Ivlov and Ivlov became Lapin" (*TT* 44). Ivlov undercuts the validity of his testimony, he tells Irina: "it was not true that he once worked on agent records. He had invented the whole story only to show me the great depth of his knowledge concerning the Centre's affairs. The truth was he had worked for Karla" (*TT* 44).

"The truth" has become increasingly hard to deter- mine throughout this pattern of narrative digressions. We learn of the Circus mole only by travelling through a labyrinthine house of mirrors (or, perhaps, a funhouse);

with each narrative turn we encounter newly reconstituted versions of truth that become, in one respect, less reliable than previous manifestations because of their more distant frame (with regard to both the time and speaker), but in another respect, they are paradoxically more authoritative because they hold a relative position just slightly closer to the ultimate source in question -- Karla and Moscow Centre. Uncertainty rules. In *Taking Sides: The Fiction of John le Carré* Tony Barley states that "the particular quality of le Carré's fiction is . . . its careful polyphony and free exchanges in narrative emphasis which constitutes its decentred counterpoint" (101). Within each new narrative frame we encounter new facts and questions, challenging our belief and our skepticism. Guillam and Smiley query Tarr's account, then Tarr questions Irina's disclosure, and finally Irina probes the fabulous truths and inextricable lies of Ivlov's revelation. Le Carré sets each guarantor of truth (Divver 57) against some other, thus disclaiming narrative authority and, likewise, calling readers and our surrogate interpreter (Smiley) to task, that is: to question authorial dogma, to read as somewhat authorless readers, and with hope, to bring the slight kernel of truth lying somewhere near the hub of the narrative a little closer to the story's surface.

The three novels that le Carré wrote and planned as a trilogy have been published in an omnibus edition entitled *The Quest for Karla*. Fittingly, the title reflects le Carré's thematic predilection for the dialectical process: to attempt an understanding of society's continual assertion of self-worth at the expense of some Lacanian Other, and to attempt to see the Other not as a disparate entity, but as part of the whole, or in Lars Ole Sauerberg's term as "the enemy within" (170). "Quest" may be defined as an official inquiry (OED) or a personal or chivalric pursuit. Karla, derived from the Old English *Ceorl* or the Old German *Karol*, means "man" or "freeman." Thus the trilogy, in at least a titular sense, concerns the questioning and the cost of humanity's goals, or in more modest terms, of a man's beliefs. We find one scene, variously described in all three novels, involving the exchange between Smiley, as the *agent provocateur*, and Karla (Gerstmann) as the unwilling prisoner in Delhi, that, with Gerstmann's silent confession, clarifies the trilogy's thematic dilemma "to be *inhuman in defence of our humanity harsh in defence of compassion*. To be single minded *in defence of our disparity*" (*HS* 460).

The first account of Smiley's encounter with Karla/Gerstmann comes in Smiley's confidential rendering

of the event to Guillam following their second interrogation of Ricki Tarr (*TT* chpt. 23). After a brief preamble recalling Karla's mystical "legend" Smiley starts his narrative, detailing his memories of the Delhi prison. Near this point le Carré begins to expose the duality inherent in Smiley's character and its reflection in Karla. Smiley prefaces his tale by telling Guillam of his theory, which he "suspects" is "rather immoral": "if we lavish our concern on every stray cat, we never get to the centre of things" (*TT* 140). Hereafter, he describes Gerstmann as "avuncular. Modest, and avuncular. He would have looked very well as a priest . . . could have been a schoolmaster: tough -- whatever that means" (*TT* 140). Smiley's "immoral theory" might have well been spoken by Karla, and his description of Karla, conversely, could be a George Smiley self-portrait. He twice describes Gerstmann as possessing an "avuncular" look; this, in part, reflects Smiley's initially inferred or unconscious kinship with his enemy. And as Smiley continues his tale, his fellowship with Karla becomes eminently clearer. Smiley recognises that Karla "*looked* like half a union," that he made up the other half and that, in fact, their roles of interrogator and interrogatee could be effectively reversed. At one point Smiley states:

> Is it called "projection" or "substitution"? . . . I detest those terms but I'm sure one of them applies. I exchanged my predicament for his, that is the point, and as I now realise I began to conduct an interrogation with myself . . . The interrogator projects himself into the life of a man who does not speak. (*TT* 143)

Smiley's last question to Karla is a plea, asking him(self?) to attempt a reconciliation between his faith and actions: "I begged him to consider whether he really believed; whether faith in the system he had served was honestly possible to him at this moment" (*TT* 146). But just as Smiley's offer of western freedom comes coupled with his threat of a Siberian prison, and his promise of American cigarettes implied Karla's assent to betray the Soviets, Smiley's final compassionate parley meets only Gerstmann's cruel silence; Smiley's interrogation of Karla is tantamount to revealing the final and unknowable centre of the *Matryoshka* doll. The clash between the rhetoric of human sentiment and the amoral logic of machiavellian pragmatism reveals only that this centre of ultimate knowledge stays hidden. "Stray cats", it appears, remain an unavoidable element and, consequently, we never find "the centre of things."

Smiley's ineffectual efforts to make Gerstmann agree to any terms of surrender is an illustration of Smiley's own difficulty in coming to terms with the philosophy he desires to protect and that philosophy by which he lives. Silence is Smiley's ultimate answer. Gerstmann's unspoken testimony is an affirmation in one sense; it attests to the irreconcilability of these complementary perspectives. They can never meet, nor can one be subsumed by the other. To stress the interior nature and indelibility of this conflict between belief and action le Carré alters the nature of expectations of a Smiley/Karla encounter by substituting "Gerstmann" for Karla. Hence Smiley is not battling with an arch-enemy so much as he is battling with himself. Le Carré's choice of this particular name further reveals the philosophic stalemate. "Gerst" is German for "barley" and "barley," as an English misreading of parley, is "a term used in the games of children when a truce is demanded," not unlike the schoolyard phrase "to cry uncle." Alas, Gerstmann remains foreign to this English "barley" and, moreover, he is too avuncular to cry uncle, thus the points of view remain silently at odds.

Similarly, Smiley's remembrance of his own name -- his own identity -- at their meeting, as recalled in *Smiley's People*, reemphasises the impossibility of

reconciling any ideal vision with its pragmatic counterpart. As Karla becomes Gerstmann, Smiley takes the "alias Barraclough or Standfast" (*SP* 153). "Standfast" rings clearly enough as a sign of philosophical retrenchment and requires little interpretation, except to say that it involves an intertextual borrowing much like "Mr. Hyde." Le Carré takes the name from John Buchan's novel *Mr Standfast*, whose title character is a representative of the English gentleman amateur spy. Hence it is in this voice that Smiley implores: "join us. I beg. Listen to me, listen to the arguments, the philosophy" (*SP* 154). But he invariably meets Gerstmann's equally singleminded "dogmatic silence." Any deep retrechment may seem less discernable in "Barraclough," but two of its syllables "bar" and "clogh" tautologically reiterate a sense of prevention, or standing fast. Throughout the repeated interrogations in the Delhi prison, both Gerstmann/Karla and Standfast/Smiley reveal the irreconcilable gap separating the search, or quest, for some life-supporting undeniable truths that may substantiate our actions -- our existence -- and those silent answers which come as the final response to such enquires.

Alan Turner's search for the spectre-like Leo Harting in *A Small Town in Germany* approximates the coalescing of what might best be called the *Matryoshka*

narrative, evident in Tarr's tale, and the roaring silence or gap of uncertainty illustrated through Smiley's interrogation of Gerstmann. Turner's search for Harting implies the quest for a man and his ideals; the name "Leo Harting" echoes with associations to a pre-lapsarian England, and an Englishness demarcated by an idyllic, "Lion-hearted," mythology. When Harting's absence significantly becomes a presence, at the Anglican chapel, Bradfield consults the Chaplain about finding a replacement to lead the congregation during hymns, and the Chaplin replies: "'perhaps someone could give a note . . . . Johnny Gaunt has a nice tenor" (*ST* 228). Le Carré's Johnny Gaunt, the Chancery Guard, is an apt replacement for Leo; Johnny recalls Shakespeare's John of Gaunt, and the suggestion of Johnny's "nice tenor" brings to mind John of Gaunt's hymnal to "This other Eden, demi-paradise / This fortress built by nature for herself" (*Richard II* 2.1.42-3). When Turner questions Gaunt he rhetorically states: "you sang for him" (*ST* 263). Gaunt, furthermore, blindly defends Harting: "'a fine man really, too good for this floor . . . I did my best for Leo and I would again" (*ST* 271-2). Leo Harting is an archaic gerund for English idealism, he is an anachronism who believes in the rhetoric extolled by "this happy breed of men" and who subsequently has no

place in a world of de Lisle's "uniblood." Cork's pecuniary anti-mercantilism, Bradfield's empty faith -- "I'm a great believer in hypocrisy" (*ST* 430), or the various splintered faiths held by this new breed of English. Like the surrounding landscape which is continually shrouded in an obscuring mist, the seven hills of Königswinter and the land of the Nibelungs (292), the character of Leo Harting recalls an age of myth, of Albion, and of unquestioned certainties that now rests in Chamberlain's shadow; that is, he has become overshadowed by a fog of bureaucratic moderation, of indifferent mediocrity.

Harting's zealous and innocent Anglophilia, however, defines just one part of his character; the other side of Leo's character is defined by its lack of definition, its absence. Turner's task is to reconstruct Harting's existence, an existence that is all but denied by the powers of the British Embassy. During Turner's initial briefing, Lumley declares that "we know nothing about him. He's not even carded. As far as we're concerned he doesn't exist" (*ST* 236). In Bonn, Turner first asks Peter de Lisle about Leo: "Did you know him?" De Lisle quickly defers: "I think . . . we ought to leave the first bite to Rawley" (*ST* 241). And Bradfield, like Lumley and de Lisle before him, declines the question, greeting Turner's enquiries with a disdain informed by

Turner's disregard for the embassy's "law of moderation." Turner soon realises that to the upper echelon at the embassy Leo "wasn't any bloody thing, positive or negative" (*ST* 249). Bradfield, the embassy's official voice confirms this: "he is so trivial . . . . So utterly lightweight . . . . It's easy to lose sight of now: the sheer insignificance of him" (*ST* 253). If Turner is to know Harting he will have to re-interpret all his interrogations, rejecting some information, valourizing other bits, and ultimately contructinghis own history of the man.

Turner soon finds himself following a chain of interrogations that leads him, at once, towards and away from Harting; the more he strives to find out about Leo the more he finds doors closing and dissemblance practiced. Hence as Turner comes closer to revealing this traitor/hero, the more fragmented his final picture of Leo becomes. Much like Smiley investigating Bill Haydon and Karla, Turner must attempt to reconcile all the disparate qualities of Harting's character if he hopes to fathom this silenced idealism. He must work to understand Harting's past. Regarding Turner's enquiry Tony Barley states that "it is not that new actions occur which help the final completion of the evolving picture, for the actions comprising the enigma are almost

invariably historic and lie inertly awaiting revelation" (66). Thus Turner's job is to reconstruct the shards of conversations and interrogations that he has gathered to recreate Harting's history, or as Turner considers in his own mind:

> You will not go to bed until you are at least aware of the trail you must follow. The task of an intellectual . . . is to make order out of chaos . . . . Re-form the fragments, make all the pieces one piece . . . . Come on, Turner, you're the philosopher, tell us how the world goes round. What little absolute will we put into Harting's mouth, for instance. Facts. Construct . . . . put your theories to work. (*ST* 321-2)

Lumley places Turner's job in another light: "what are you looking for? Some bloody absolute. If there's one thing I hate it's a cynic in search of God" (*ST* 238). This compares with Harting's situation as described by de Lisle: "Leo's gone and attached himself to some silly faith. God is dead. You can't have it both ways, that would be too medieval" (*ST* 302). As Leo Harting and Turner engage in their quests they become historians, chroniclers seaching for some final truth, vainly hoping

to see through the eye of Providence. Leo -- the archivist -- seeks to unearth, forever, the roots of Karfeld's evil, and Turner -- the interrogator -- hopes to finally know what possesses Leo Harting. Recognising a slight extension of his terms, W.H. Walsh identifies such quests as the "historical ideal":

> What every historian seeks for is not the bare recital of unconnected facts, but a smooth narrative in which every event falls as it were into its natural place and belongs to an intelligible whole. In this respect the ideal of the historian is in principle identical with that of the dramatist or novelist. Just as a good novel . . . appears to consist not in a series of isolated episodes, but in the orderly development of the complex situation from which it starts, so a good history possesses a unity of plot or theme.
>
> (*Philosophy of History* 34)

Walsh, significantly, insists that such reconstructions amount to the "ideal," not the real. Consequently, Harting's and Turner's efforts should be recognised as those of idealists. Both men endeavour to come to terms with fractured histories passed on by the silent voices

of Europe's victims or, at best, through the fearful reticent cries of its victors. Both men fail. Turner and Harting fall short of realizing their goals, each with the possibility of fruition in sight. As with Smiley's confrontation with Gerstmann and Tarr's narrative, Leo's and Turner's investigations of their separate yet entwined histories ultimately lead to a veiled truth, one hidden by an unfathomable silence, beyond reconstructions and historicity, finally beyond knowing.

In his preface to Don McCullin's *Hearts of Darkness* le Carré speaks, much like one of Marlow's listeners, of the difficulty to know a man, even after interviewing him, after interrogating him: "I had been nursing plans to break down his life into dates and places, to show a factual progression of the man . . . . I had thought, like a policeman, that by pinning him into a mundane narration of facts I might unearth some clue to him which he was unconsciously concealing." But he refrains, realizing that "the reality of suffering is incommunicable." (19-21). In le Carré's novels interrogations and their accompanying interior narratives serve as bridges that can never be completely traversed, although we desire to approach the other side, the chasm that lies beneath the bridge and the tenuous structure of such

bridges prevents us from completing the journey. Thus we remain suspended, tethered at one end by self-made certainties and firm assurances, and on the other side, held up by the slight threads of dire hope and doubtful belief.

In *Coming Through Slaughter* Webb, the detective who seeks out Bolden the jazz musician, describes the answers to all his questions as "spokes on a rimless wheel" (63). The wheel's hub might offer an original point of certainty, but each spoke's or story's meaning splays from it. Each narrative strand diverges from its centre and has no rim circumscribing meaning. Much the same can be said for le Carré's *Matryoshka* narratives; here a multiplicity of voices undermines the assurances within the Tarr enquiry, and dialogues of silent dissemblance diffuse our understanding of Leo. This discourse of "decentred counterpoint" (Barley 101) has been developed in le Carré's work to the point that its new embodiment is not really an extension of "rimless spokes"; rather, it exists as narrative wheels turning within wheels. Palfrey's world of the Russia House, Magnus Pym's suicide note in *A Perfect Spy*, and Kurtz's theatre of the real in *The Little Drummer Girl*, all serve as examples of such an extensively developed fictional world, one that revolves upon its own axis within the novel's main

narrative. Thus relativity remains at issue. Where deeds may be rejected or validated because of relative perspective and without due consideration of the act itself, le Carré often offers contrasting worlds that rub up against each other, requiring circumspection and consequently denying Ptolemaic certainties.

After Charlie auditions for Kurtz and assents to play her new roles for her new cause, she takes solace in the idea that Kurtz's Theatre proffers her a tangible set of beliefs, a truly worthwhile alternative for someone from "Nowheresville . . . [who has] . . . 'no traditions, no faith, no self-awareness, [and] no nothing.' . . . just apathy and fear" (*DG* 114):

> After all her drifting, their straight line. After her guilt and concealment, their acceptance. After all her words, their actions, their abstemiousness, their clear-eyed zeal, their authenticity, their true allegiance. (*DG* 138)

Charlie accepts their fiction because she believes that at its foundation lies a justifiable good that lives on in some perfect stainless isolation: "'They say you will save lives, Charlie,' Joseph explained, in a detached tone from which all hint of theatre had been rigorously expunged" (*DG* 139). Charlie's only alternative to

Kurtz's call-up is the distant second choice her failed career of playing stage heroines like Shaw's Saint Joan and Shakespeare's Rosalind. Her choice appears as one between a frustrated and ineffectual career where Charlie becomes Rosalind and then in turn becomes Ganymede for mere comedic entertainment, and the vocational performance awaiting her "in the theatre of deeds" (139) where she sheds one skin of philosophical affinity for another, with a drummer girl's hope "to bring peace" (*DG* 139).

Charlie's initial induction to the theatre of the real comes well before her audition with Kurtz's company it starts with her introduction to Joseph on the island of Mykonos. More than any promise of action, degree of abstemiousness, or true allegiance, it is Joseph who makes up the foundation of Charlie's new belief. He is a promise, a fate, that she can neither comprehend or deny. As if in the opening scenes of a Shakespearean comedy, Joseph and Charlie meet like two lovers prompted by some divine dramatist's providential coincidences. He was in Nottingham, he watched *Saint Joan*, and appeared in York to view another performance. Now he is in Mykonos. For Charlie he becomes "her secret man," her fixation and, effectively, the Orlando to her Rosalind, the Dauphin to her Joan: "she . . . imagined herself wildly in love with

someone she had not spoken to" (*DG* 53). Joseph fulfills a role in her imagination as the romantic ideal. Although Joseph originally sets out to enroll Charlie in Kurtz's production, we are presented with Charlie's view of the events, and accordingly, we see Charlie cast Joseph as her new lover and audience; he is to play opposite Charlie's new character of an idealist in pursuit of an absolute love. Where Charlie had lived in the theatre of the absurd with Big Al's circus-like troupe, Joseph accomodates her desire for a theatre of the absolute. For Charlie he becomes that theatre, that absolute.

During the final scene of Gadi Becker's initial portrayal of Jose, (the Greek Joseph) two incidents reveal Charlie's attachment of her desired absolute to Joseph; the first one associates Becker with the theatre, and the second illustrates what Charlie thinks a theatre ideally "*should*" be. While descending from the heights of the Acropolis, "Joseph paused to gaze into the melancholy Theatre of Dionysos, an empty bowl lit only by the moon and stray beams of distant lights" (*DG* 95). The idea of theatre is reinforced by illumination from the moon, the moon in Greek was sometimes called "*Thea*," and shortly before, Charlie views Jose in the same light as "a face in the moonlight" (*DG* 93). Jose's pause is self-reflection, or self-recognition of his role playing.

Joseph is a manifestation of "the melancholy theatre" produced by Becker. Appropriately, "Becker" means "an [empty] bowl." Thus he is a living metaphor of the theatre of the real. Immediately after Joseph's pause there occurs an exchange where he asks Charlie for her understanding of the theatre's purpose:

> "Drama must have an application to reality. Drama must be useful. Do you believe that?"
>
> . . . "Well I agree," she said . . . . "Theatre *should* be useful. It *should* make people share and feel."
>
> . . . . "Be real therefore? You are sure?"
>
> "Sure I'm sure." (*DG* 95).

By falling in love with Joseph, Charlie commits herself to the philosophy of the theatre of the real. Picasso's maxim that art is a lie that tells the truth might be understood as Charlie's new faith, for she desires that this theatre will serve her as an imitation that becomes the ideal, as a fiction that becomes real.

The problem lies in finding the truth of the fiction. Joseph, or Jose (who is Richtoven), becomes Michel who is Salim and he is Yanuka. Behind the masks of all these persons lies Becker. And even his identity lacks much definitiveness. Kurtz asks Litvak: "'Becker? What the

hell name is that?'" Explaining the choice, Litvak states that "'it's the German version of the Hebrew version of the German version of his name" (*DG* 40). A listing of Kurtz's *dramatis personae* might approach the complexity of a biblical genealogy, but unlike such genealogies it has no mosaic or synoptic authority. Le Carré offers us uncertain fictions of a character's world: Becker is a sabra and a hero in Israel's wars against its "aggressors"; yet, Joseph/Richtoven appears a nationless European, set adrift from politics on a Greek isle; in turn, his Michel remains one of the Palestinian warriors, he fights for a displaced homeland on the self-made frontiers of Europe; Salim makes his appearance as a Gucci terrorist, and Yanuka as the victim of political expediency. Each character, to some degree, exists only as a theatrical apparition, a fiction; we could also argue, however, that these players reveal aspects of a multi-faceted reality. As Charlie attempts to come to terms with the many faces of Becker she finds that her investment of belief in the theatre of the real is beset with uncertainty. Even on this "real" stage "all the men and women [are] merely players"(*As You Like It* 2. 7.140).

The deeper that Charlie immerses herself in this theatre of deeds the more she questions the manifold purposes of her acting. With each new scene Charlie

comes closer to fulfilling a commit-ment to act but she is taken yet another degree from the ideals that she pursued in Mykonos; therefore, the validity of her quest, as it comes nearer completion, becomes increasingly suspect. Her once crystalline perception of the cause embodied by Joseph grows ever murkier as she plays out various roles as Kurtz's convert, Michel's girlfriend, and ultimately as the dedicated Palestinian terrorist who covertly works for the Israeli cause. What Charlie once viewed as authenticity eventually degenerates into the "story within the story within the story" (*DG* 222). In her efforts to forge and to hold on to some central beliefs she suffers a loss of her identity: "I'm English, German, Israeli, and Arab" (DG 223).

Ironically she returns to a state like "Nowheresville." With every new degree of commitment and her increasing contributions to the cause of peace Charlie reacquires feelings of fear and apathy, except what was once apathy has been exchanged for surrender. Towards the end of her performance in the theatre of the real, after Becker has gone through each metamorphoses, Kurtz has produced his final scene, and Charlie has put on her final mask as Khalil's accomplice, we are presented with a new metaphor for the theatre to show how far Charlie has come from the ideal to which she aspired on Mykonos. Khalil

states: "'terror is theatre. We inspire, we frighten, we awake indignation, anger, love. We enlighten. The theatre also'" (*DG* 398). Khalil's definition directly contradicts Charlie's original conception as informed by her relationship with Joseph, yet it remains consistent with her initial notion that the theatre should "'waken people's awareness'" (*DG* 95). Ultimately the nature of Charlie's wakened awareness entails the recognition that the search for certainty in the theatre of the real produces only greater uncertainty.

The quest for ideals continues in *A Perfect Spy* where Magnus Pym attempts, through his contemplative confession, to deal with the irreconcilable nature of his ideals and actions. Pym's epistle serves him as the chance "to tell it straight," thus all of his duplicities may be shed and the truth of his "overpromised self set free": "word for word the truth. No evasions, no fictions, no devices" (*PS* 22). The mental disclaimer prefacing his text implicitly foretells of the many "devices" which Pym employs to authenticate his fiction -- "the last of many versions of the Pym you thought you knew" (*PS* 22). The confession mode in itself establishes a large degree of authenticity; in "Authenticity-Codes and Sincerity-Formulas" R.M. Adams says of confessing: "the adventurer in evil may be hailed as a hero of

humanity, a widener of spiritual horizons. The madman is an ultimate truthteller" (588). The structural nature of confessions reveals another "device" Pym uses to validate his tale, it is the first-person narrative voice. Somerset Maugham, concerning this method of telling, states: "its object is to achieve credibility, for when someone tells you what he states is happening to himself you are more likely to believe that he is telling the truth" (8). Aside from using the authority vested in *me*, Magnus' account is substantiated by yellowed press-cuttings, sepia photographs, and numerous notes and correspondence culled from Rick's green filing cabinet. "Evidence, Tom. Facts. Here is Rick's rosette of yellow silk . . . . Here is the centre-page spread from the *Gulworth Mercury* . . . . See the picture of the podium" (*PS* 280). Magnus legitimizes his history with such phrases as "history records two meetings," "history records also," and "history records further . . ." (*PS* 39-41). Perhaps the clearest indicator of Pym's need to validate this "last of many versions" can be found in the terms he uses to mark the periods of his development: he lives with his father in "Paradise," suffers through "the Fall," and afterwards lives in exile. Albert Divver speaks of the tendency in traditional hermeneutics that helps to illustrate the nature of the relationship here

(between the epistolary confession and the various textual referents) as "the desire to be 'correct,' the desire to align oneself with an authority, a guarantor of truth" (57). It is as if Pym has set out to justify the ways of God and spies to man, to himself, and to find a world order that reconciles his acts of betrayal and suffering with an historical ideal and with truth.

The authority which is originally ascribed to Magnus' text as a "correct" historic retelling becomes extended to his narrative's philosophical position; that is, it would be extended except that Magnus has none. Throughout a life marked by deceit and betrayal he has been required to continually reevaluate his relationships. He often desires to be possessed by faith, but regularly he must discard the intimate trust that he places in traditional authority: his father, schools, churches, government, and friends. Finally Magnus cannot even believe in living. When Magnus is "arrested" in Czechoslovakia, Axel states the questions that Magnus will try and answer through his final testament:

> "Sir Magnus, you have in the past betrayed me but, more important, you have betrayed yourself. Even when you are telling the truth you lie. You have loyalty and you have affection. But to what? To

whom?" (*PS* 432)

All of the techniques that Magnus uses to authenticate his story indicate his attempt to find, through a lens of retrospection, an ideology that might help explain or justify his life of betrayal and to know where his loyalty, and thus where his belief, lies. "Sometimes, Tom, we have to do a thing in order to find out the reason for it. Sometimes our actions are questions, not answers" (*PS* 22). But like all such quests undertaken in the le Carréan universe Magnus' comes to no certain end, except that it ends in suicide. Albert Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus," discussing a similar topic, offers some illumination regarding Magnus' quest and his final solution:

> if man realized that the universe like him can love and suffer, he would be reconciled . . . . That nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute illustrates the essential impulse of the human drama. But the fact of that nostalgia's existence does not imply that it is to be immediately satisfied. (13)

Through his narrative Pym makes a final effort to satisfy his "appetite for the absolute," but to no avail. The reality of his experience speak louder than the vanquished ideals which he seeks to reinstate. His world

holds few certainties or assurances, and through his process of recollection he finds just one truth: "he knows that the end of the human mind is failure. He tarries over the spiritual adventures revealed by history and pitilessly discloses the flaw in each system, the illusion that saved everything, the preaching that hid nothing" (Camus 19). Although Camus speaks here specifically of Karl Jaspers, an "existentialist" perspective well defines Pym's understanding of his life. Thus his suicide is the perfect postscript to the confessions of a perfect spy: for "killing yourself amounts to confession. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it . . . . Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized . . . the absence of any profound reason for living"(Camus 5).

At the start of the novel we find that Magnus' "destination was a terrace of ill-lit Victorian boarding-houses with names like Bel-a-Vista, The Commodore and Eureka" and that Magnus is "a representative of something" (*PS* 3). The external narrative confirms the sense of Pym's search: his desired end is something "like" a "beautiful view," the control and order of a commodore, and ultimately the idea that "I have found it." But of what Magnus is a representative he finally cannot say, and regardless of all of his narrative's claims to

authenticity it records no justifications, only doubt.

Le Carré structures the novel in a manner so that Pym's selftold story, and his internal quest, is constantly juxtaposed with the third-person account of Jack Brotherhood's explicit search for Pym. Brotherhood's effort is a physical manifestation -- the deed -- that corresponds to Pym's mental activities. From his initial interrogation of Mary to his meetings with the Cousins and beyond, Brotherhood seeks a perfect knowledge: "'just give it me the way it happened. No ice, no fizz, no bullshit'" (*PS* 15). In fact, the externalised search for Magnus extends beyond the point of view of Uncle Jack. The third-person narrative also includes many scenes presented from Mary Pym's and Grant Lederer's perspective, and situations where they express a similar desire for a true understanding of Pym. These characters (and Axel) amount to what Pym calls "all my creditors and co-owners incorporated" (*PS* 22). It is with the fear of a lost investment, or great expectations lost, that they endeavour to discover the real Pym. Each of them holds a different interest in Pym, and thus constructs their own version of the man. The difficulty of finally knowing Pym is re-inforced through the presentation of their various perspectives, but the double narrative also offer us a point of comparison with Pym's text. Where Pym

attempts to establish order and purpose in his first-person account the third-person versions of events are reconstructions informed by panic and distrust. As Magnus calmly writes, trying to render some truthful ideal, Brotherhood's fraternity of spies and "all the Marys" reveal, through their actions, the difficulty of really knowing what lies behind all the masks.

With Pym's defection Brotherhood, Mary, and Lederer, for the first time, are faced with the question "why did Pym do it?" (*PS* 273). They have been living in a world of deception without the need to question such activities until Magnus' disappearance, now they grapple with their own "guarantors of truth" -- ranging from Mary's memory or Jack's phone taps, to the use of "skip distances, frequency variations, and probable reception zones" (239) -- just hoping to find that "why." Their first reaction is denial, simply the wish that it never occurred; while waiting for her inevitable interrogation Mary thinks: "Magnus . . . you've had an abberation and you're better, I'll never even ask what happened, I'll never doubt you again" (*PS* 9). Similarly, Brotherhood cannot not accept Magnus' guilt when offered the reassurance of Artelli's technical "indicators." Throughout the third-person narrative we witness a constant questioning of statistics and facts. Almost as quickly as facts are presented,

they are swept away by explanation. Unlike the facts presented in Pym's confession these do not exist in isolation, thus they face inspection and a comparison with the other possible histories. But as Mary, Brotherhood and Lederer's juxtapose their own accounts seeking to eliminate contradictions and consolidate facts, the novel's structure of alternating narratives incites readers to compare the world according to Magnus with the other worlds to the same end. In light of such comparisons the authority of Pym's text lessens. It is a voice in the wilderness, yet it is just one voice among many.

The narrative of the *Russia House* is le Carré's most intricately developed "story within the story within the story" to date. The search for meaning begins and ends at Goethe's "great novel." It is the secret that engenders our need to know and that we never reach any satisfaction in knowing. It is the text at the core of *The Russia House*, like the darkness at the heart of the *Matryoska* doll which escapes determination, it is a model text which reveals the persistent fiction of knowledge. During the final evening of Barley's preparation, Walter defines the basic problem Bluebird's manuscript presents:

> "The issue is *why*," Walter trilled . . . .
> "That's what we're after. Not the substance, but

> the motive *Why*? . . . . In the beginning was not the word, not the deed, not the silly serpent. In the beginning was *why*? (109)

Palfrey's collection of narratives, his "exculpation," reveals the seemingly inexhaustible ways in which this question can be formed and the equally inconclusive ways by which we answer it. At the novel's opening Katya explains Goethe's "message," telling Landau that "it concerns actions before words . . . . It demands action and rejects all cosmetic changes" (*RH* 8). But regardless of how true and straightforward Katya's answer appears it is not enough because we do not know of the "why" informing her opinion; again, Walter sums up the problem: "did she invent the stuff herself? Is she really in touch with him? Is she in touch with someone different and if so who?" (*RH* 109, 149). We want to know. Le Carré exploits all our "wants," reiterating the idea that there is an abject futility in such questions when their answers are searched out with hidden microphones, or with the tools and intentions of "professional analysis" that strips away too much human contact, privacy, and dignity.

One example of such futility is Palfrey's account of the experts' interpretations of Katya's letter which accompanied Goethe's manuscript:

> How many opinions had they not listened to and discarded? It was written in a train, six experts in Langley had pronounced. In bed, said three more in London. In the back of a car. In haste, in jest, in love, in terror. By a woman, by a man, they had said. The writer is left-handed, right-handed . . . . script of origin is Cyrillic, is Roman, is both, is neither. (*RH* 62)

As Pym is the author who endeavours to understand his experience, the Russia House and its American counterpart in Langley are publishing "houses" replete with "experts" that edit, interpret and evaluate letters, conversations, actions, and ultimately Goethe's text to justify their previously published versions of the world. Barley, as the recruited envoy of the Russia House, explains to Katya that his concern regarding Bluebird is "about authenticity . . . . 'I mean, *you* know publishing" (*RH* 137). But as Palfrey's description of the numerous misreadings of Katya's letter reveals, the task of authenticating an author's identity (implied or otherwise) or what an author's meaning is most difficult if not impossible.

The constant narrative oscillation between third-person(s) and the various first-person accounts reemphasises the questions of authorship, implied authorship, and authenticity plaguing the Russia House. We begin

with Palfrey's first-person assurances -- "I have seen it" (*RH* 3) -- and his third-person knowledge, and move through a bewildering progression of accounts that leave us unsure where to look for authority. As Harry/Palfrey slips into his own narrative and grants Niki Landau the storyteller's role, le Carré subtly indicates that we will not find a single story here: rather we will find versions of stories which simultaneously support and contradict one another, evincing the truth of fiction, or as John Berger states: "never again will a single story be told as though it were the only one" (45). The second chapter opens with a brief summation of events -- in a committee narrative -- that ironically restates Berger's notion. "The whole of Whitehall was agreed that no story should ever begin that way again" (*RH* 23). The irony comes out largely on two levels: first, the committee's purpose is to distill truth out of a host of accounts from doormen, janitors, and Niki Landau, regarding the series of events that lead Niki to Palmer Wellow. But beyond the obvious truth (that they did meet) we mostly find growing uncertainty: "we were unable to achieve a consensus" (*RH* 24). The second irony arises in the way that le Carré presents the information. He allows the committee to speak for itself from a "we" and "our" perspective. Readers are spoken to in "the less sparing

language of Ned and his colleagues at the Russia House" (*RH* 23), and the "committee narrative" informs our perspective of events with phrases like "our committee asked sternly" and "so far as we were able to make out" (*RH* 24). Thus instead finding some essential facts the committee adds its own version to a growing pile of versions. With the alternate narratives of Palfrey and Landau, and a depiction of the Russia House's first attempt at publishing their truth, le Carré illustrates the difficulty in divining anything approximating a final meaning.

The plural perspectives continue to multiply as the novel develops; in turn, we get reports from Palfrey, Niki, "our committee," Landau again, Barley, Katya (through a letter), and Goethe (via Barley's memory in a "passage" that was "never paraphrased, never condensed, [and] never 'reconstrued'" [*RH* 84]). But regardless Barley's powerful memory, or the inherent physical proof of Katya's letter, or any suggestion of authenticity, every summary that takes us towards Goethe's statement "induces a sense of artifice and of a narrator's presence" (Chatman 222). The journey of Bluebird's manuscript, which starts with Bluebird but requires the hand to hand transaction of Katya, Niki, Palmer, and Ned's experts, before Barley becomes informed that he cannot be

informed of the manuscript's message serves as a parallel for readers' increasing realisation that we cannot be fully "informed" because of the increasing artifice and distancing marked by the narrative frame. The problem of getting a desired article of information, as manifested in the account of the text's physical transmission is also echoed in le Carré's short description of Katya's "shopping" for the twin's cowboy shirts and a dental check-up:

> She would collect the two tickets for the Philharmonic . . . . she would trade the tickets . . . [for] . . . twenty-four bars of imported soap . . . . With the fancy soap she would buy the bolt of green check cloth . . . . she would hand the cloth to Olga Stanislavsky, who, in return for favours to be negotiated, would make two cowboy shirts . . . . And there might even be enough cloth left over to squeeze them both a private check-up from the dentist. (*RH* 113)

Much like the transmission of Goethe's text, Katya's exchange and barter economics reflects the difficulty of attaining the straight goods. With every exchange of materials and information, le Carré illustrates that

goals are not easily defined, sometimes an action belies its ultimate intent, and that purposes change as situations dictate. The effect is that we understand everything in the novel to be "reconstrued" -- in spite of Palfrey's contrary claim -- and therefore, that knowledge never presents itself *en clair* from beginning to end, but only as the inconclusive expressions of others.

Of all the novel's events, perhaps "The Island Conference" best illustrates le Carré's characters in search of an author, or more specifically, their search for a preprescribed meaning of his text and, consequently, their failed search for complete understanding. The scene works as an inversion of most le Carréan interrogation episodes. Whereas the majority of his enquiries involves the pursuit of an almost totally unknown entity, Barley's questioners have Bluebird's complete text before them as well as the tapes of any earlier testimonies and transactions. Unlike most enquiries, where it is the interrogatee who offers manifold accounts, blurring the lines between truth and fiction (like Riki Tarr), here it is the interrogators who supply the fiction in hope to extract the truth. Sheriton and his men approach their truth-seeking task first by imagining that Goethe's

manuscript is "an organised put-together," that it is comprised of nothing but "*smoke*" (*RH* 239). Thus they proceed to suggest alternate fictions to the course of events as described by Barley regarding his trip and the "Lisbon Approach" with truth as their goal. They deliberately use what is false to verify what is real. Virtually their entire investigation of truth consists of deceptions. Events on Nowhere Island are "euphemistically" called a "conference," Mr. Blair becomes Mr. Brown and Sheriton becomes Haggarty. Sheriton's precursory interrogation on a matter which had been "dismissed as irrelevant . . . long ago" (*RH* 235) forebodes the deceitfulness of the questioning to come and the attempt to make the truth fit their prefixed fiction. Ultimately the interrogations show that they have no faith in man; Barley's testimony is only as good as the polygraph paper upon which it is written, and only as accurate as a machine deems it to be. The experts, as Sheriton states, are "glasnostics": unwilling and unable to say "I believe" without the assurances of a lie detector. They have spent too much time extracting their own version of the truth out of their own fictions, and for too long they have tried too hard setting truth's limits. An appropriate metaphor for the investigations on Nowhere island can be found in

Haggarty's description of the coffee. He states that "they gather acorns and press them and make coffee out of them. That what they do out here" (*RH* 235). Their truth, like their coffee, is ersatz.

"The hardest thing in our trade or anybody else's is to say 'I believe" (*RH* 39). The statement is Walter's but it might belong to anyone or describe the motivation for any incident in the novel. The individual confession and self-questioning of Magnus are expanded, effectively encompassing all espionage communities through a multiplicity of voices best represented by old Palfrey Barley, and Bluebird. Much as in the theatre of the real and Pym's personal history, the multiple narrative construction of The Russia House allows le Carré to deal with questions of relativity. The Russia House's search for definitive meaning reveals that we so often construct assurances upon shifting foundations, and that regardless of how diligently we seek truth, like Bluebird's manuscript, it lies beyond our grasp.

In *The Russia House* some sections of the narrative are related in dialects of telegraphese, military reportese, and Haig-speak. Such "civil tongues" compare with the extensive "newspeak" permeating the corridors of the Circus.. Considering the language, it would not be surprising to find that an inspiration for le Carré's Circus idiom came through his imagining a social organ founded on the observances noted in George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language"; as Orwell states:

> political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible . . . . The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. When there is a gap between one's real and one's declared aims, one turns, as it were, to long words and exhausted idioms . . . . In our age there is no such thing as "keeping out of politics." All issues are political issues and politics itself is a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia. (262-3)

The codes of language and action used by Circus personnel reflect Orwell's remarks upon political language and thought. Le Carré's use of the espiocratic jargon and tradecraft illustrates a further development of the themes of defending the indefensible, in this instance, terms and actions which inspire little contemplation on behalf of his characters, engage his readers' sensibilities. We initially may grant some degree of validity to actions cloaked in the obfuscation of the spy industry's terminology, but eventually we come to understand the codes of words and actions as insidious metaphors, privileging indefensible actions and abating the need for their justification.

Le Carré's conception of the Circus, like the character of Smiley, is well developed in his first novel but unlike Smiley the Circus organisation has managed to prosper -- it exists in a slightly modified form in all his novels, excepting *The Naive and Sentimental Lover* and, perhaps, *The Little Drummer Girl*. The perpetuity of the Circus or a sister organisation, and what looks like the retirement of Smiley denotes not favouritism, it merely signifies Smiley is (or was) a holdover from the days of "inspired amateurism" and that characters like Smiley have been fighting a tragic, ineffective, yet valiant, battle against a re-generative machine, "the efficiency, bureaucracy, and intrigue of a large Government department"

(*CD* 12). In some respect the peculiar Circus vocabulary tries to humanize the dehumanised products and actions of a modern state's secret machinery. "To humanize" may be understood as the act of reinvesting our existence with an order and purpose beyond mere mechanical continuity, or to reformulate old myths in new ways, with the hope to make them live again. Hence many of the Circus terms carry the suggestion of Christian myth, and the orderliness and purpose implicit in domestic phrases (the household or family unit serves as the archetypal benevolent social construct). Thus underlings and junior staff are often known as acolytes, security officers become angels, some controllers are graced with the title of vicar, and the Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee that serves as a buffer between the Cabinet and the Circus works under the name of the Wise Men. The only element missing is God. But God requires belief; and the irony arises in recognising that le Carré's Circus troops now perform under the big top of English nationalism, freedom, democracy, or simple Christian virtue with a pronounced absence of belief. Smiley identifies the cause of the agent's agnosticism: "the enemy in those days was someone we could point at and read about in the papers. Today all I know is that I have learned to interpret the whole of life in terms of conspiracy" (*HS* 533). There are no Nazis threatening the

West's well-being. There is little of the British Empire worth defending, and communists are as likely to be found in Whitehall as Moscow. Smiley realises he that is carrying on in the cold, during a time of détente that lacks a great or noble Cause: "the isms are wasms" (Lukacs 41). Although terms like "angels" and "vicars" are meant to assert the moral purpose underlying acts of espionage actually they manage to do the opposite: the ironical implications of such terms emphasise that the Circus life is rife with duplicity and hollow beliefs.

The Looking-Glass War addresses the theme of that faith held by the Department's hollow men. Leclerc and Haldane enact the three act tragi-comedy costume drama that culminates with their sending Leiser into East Germany on the false pretext that they are fighting the good fight. Their justification arises from Leclerc's insistent re-thinking of the Department in quasi-religious terms. The Department members are nicknamed "the Grace and Favour boys." Aside from advocating a self-imposed monastic seclusion for Avery and himself, Leclerc catechises Avery regarding the "three vows" that he must take in becoming a member of the order; but each new level of commitment necessitates a further abandonment of Avery's principles as manifested by his increasing estrangement from his family. The final encounter between Avery and Sarah

illuminates the irreconcilable contradiction of overcoming one's scruples to protect the ideals one holds most dear:

> "You've been telling me that people don't matter, that *I* don't, Anthony doesn't; that agents don't. You've been telling me that you've found a vocation. Well who calls you . . . I mean: what *sort* of vocation? That's the question you never answer . . . Are you a martyr John?"
>
> . . . Avery replied, "It's nothing like that. I'm doing a job. I'm a technician; part of the machine. You want me to say double-think don't you?"
>
> ". . . That's not double-think that's unthink." (*LW* 140)

Avery's sacrifice lacks nobility because it lacks faith and serves to feed a machine that denies the values whence it was bred; for aside from self-preservation, Leclerc's Department no longer has a valid purpose. There is no alien ideology threatening the fabric of British society. To justify their acts of invading and spying upon another country, Leclerc resorts to using the authoritative language of religion and imitating the acts of a religious order. But this religious re-thinking has only resulted in "unthinking." In his essay "Thriller," Vaclav Havel writes

about the problem that "modern man, that methodical civil servant in the great bureaucracy of the world" (163), faces in his attempts to hold faith in a society bereft of living traditions and once vibrant myths. He states: "what modern reason has attempted to substitute for this order [of traditional myths], has consistently proved erroneous, false, and disastrous, because it is always in some way deceitful, artificial, rootless, lacking both ontology and morality" (160). Similarly, in *The Looking-Glass War*, the Department attempts to foster their cult of the machine but every endeavour to hold the faith calls attention to an empty and barren ideology, devoid of trust and propelled by fear.

The familial and domestic terms employed by Circus personnel invoke the feelings of order and safety which are understandably desirable in cold war warrior's world. The Soviets are referred to as "the neighbors" and American intelligence as "the Cousins." The Circus secretaries are referred to as "Mothers." And agents receive most of their early training at Sarratt -- known as "the Nursery," learning such things as "changing nappies" (controlling an agent from the Circus) and the operation of a safe-house. All of these terms point to a desire for tranquil domesticity. Like the religious terms, however, these and other words borrowed from what could be called "ordinary

life" signify not an abundance of social concord and purpose but an acute absence. In considering the relationships between men and women in the Circus novels, no happy couple springs to mind, except the Guillams (who are newlyweds at the end of *Smiley's People*). Smiley is often the central character of of the novels; his relationship with Ann illustates the clearest picture of a spy's sense of family and conception of love. The Smileys are childless and their relationship is fraught with secrecy and betrayal. Le Carré implies that Ann's betrayal is one reason for Smiley's rejoining the Circus: "Ann was in Cuba, and the revelations of a Russian cypher-clerk in Ottawa created a new demand for men of Smiley's experience" (*CD* 12). Similarly, Pym's father, the irredeemable confidence trickster who practices betrayal after betrayal, plays a most informative role in shaping Pym's future as a perfect spy. The family structure, which ideally promotes tenets of interdependency, selfless love, and social values, is usually depicted in le Carré's novels as the original arena of lost ideals and the prime impetus for one's running away to join the Circus, or one of its equivalents, in search of new ideals. But rather than encouraging social values or trust the Circus environment only strengthens feelings of human detachment. Pym's case seems pathetically obvious, and Smiley's increasingly insular nature is made clear in

A Call for The Dead: "already withdrawn, he now found himself shrinking from the temptations of friendship and human loyalty . . . . and because he was neither immortal or infallible he hated and feared the falseness of his life" (*CD* 10).

In their attempt to find a substitute for the absent family traditions of love, trust, and loyalty, le Carré's characters bestow the Circus with a personal, avuncular, quality. But each of the familial terms ultimately involves deception, especially the agent's self-deception. Love and betrayal become easily mistaken for one another when spies place their trust in an organisation that demands acts of betrayal in the name of an ultimate loyalty. Pym reiterates a thought that is found in all the novels: "love is whatever you can still betray . . . . Betrayal can only happen if you love" (*PS* 277). Although the Circus promotes the image of a surrogate family or Brotherhood, a cursory inspection of relationships shows the lack of anything nearing family or social values. Rather than validating its methods or suggesting the thought that the nation's interests inform the Circus' agenda, le Carré's use of domestic terms to define his agencies of betrayal again underscores its dialect of deceit and ideological bankruptcy.

The Circus members' use of household phrases and

religious terms intends to procure their agency some degree of justifiable orthodoxy by associating state deceit with the traditional values of home and church, but other speakers within the espionage world endeavour to maintain an air of legitimacy for such wrongdoing by introducing a scientific precision and the cant of bureaucrats in their descriptions of espionage activities. The idiom of clinical objectivity spouted by Wexler and Artelli in *A Perfect Spy*, Merv and Stanley's detached professionalism duet in *The Russia House*, and Lacon's voice of reasonable assurance in *Smiley's People* are examples where the technician's or bureaucrat's language alters meaning in a most Orwellian sense. Typical of the form is Wexler's statement: "we have here an accumulation of indicators from a wide range of sources on the one hand, and new data on the other which we consider pretty much conclusive in respect of our unease" (*PS* 236). Wexler, like most Americans in le Carré, possesses and exhibits no faith except a faith in the machine. Thus religious terms are abandoned; he refers to data "indicators," "logistics," and "sigint." There is no need for God when you have IBM. It is the computer that authorises belief; therefore, using the words of science and the computer operator helps secure belief. "Computers do not fabricate intelligence . . . . They tell the disgraceful truth without regard to charm.

race, or tradition" (*PS* 237). Artelli adds to Wexler's claims speaking with "a mathematician's frugality of words" Artelli reports that "the indicators continued to multiply" (*PS* 239). While scientific language emphasises the truth of an assertion through numerical reference -- indicators -- it tends to obscure, as Graham Greene might say, the significance of "the human factor."

In *The Russia House* Merv and Stanley take to their soothsaying with "the respectful nimbleness of an executioner," as representatives of the cold inhuman fact, as machinists. Stanley explains: "the examiner is not adversarial, he is an impartial functionary, it's the machine that does all the work" (*RH* 258). And Merv tries to reflect a scientific disinterestedness through his vocal tone. "Merv spoke tonelessly. Merv . . . prided himself upon the impartiality of his voice. He was the March of Time. He was Houston Control" (*RH* 260). Their enquiry, furthermore, does not take the form of questions. It consists of declarative statements, devoid of doubt or accusatory overtones, resembling a scientist's knowing hypotheses. In *The Postmodern Condition* Jean-François Lyotard describes such statements as "the dialects of research." He states:

> Scientific knowledge requires that one language game,

> denotative, be retained and all others excluded. A statement's truth value is the criterion determining its acceptability. Of course we find other classes of statements . . . . But they are only present as turning points in the dialectical argumentation which must end in a denotative statement. (25)

As Lyotard points out, regardless of the scientist's final claims to truth a question remains: "what proof is there that my proof is true?" (24). Merv's and Stanley's language of science exhibits a dependency upon the machine and a tendency to practise "unthink." The machines do the thinking, make the decisions and, furthermore, are the ultimate proof, the final authority. But, as with Wexler and Artelli, this litany of logisticians and polygraphers does not satisfy the quest for knowledge, nor does it validate the means of the search; it reemphasises the inhuman qualities of the espionage industry.

The bureaucratic language of Oliver Lacon illustrates, perhaps, the most pronounced example of the "gap between one's real and one's declared aims" (Orwell 263). He constantly speaks of the "masters" who control events "from on high" (*SP* 48) and deserve respectful obedience. Like Leclerc, Lacon mines his metaphors from religion. It is he who speaks of the Wise Men and he tells Smiley of their power: "those who tamper with them do so *on pain of*

excommunication . . . . This is the extent of their mastery" (*SP* 53). But he also disguises his meaning by adding unnecessary proverbial expressions and foreign phrases to his speech. In his conversation with Smiley he peppers his statements with the terms "*codex*," "*ipso facto*," "*verboten*," and "*de jure*." The terms are evidence of a slight deceit. They do not promote a clear understanding of intent, they mask it. Orwell says that "the inflated style is itself a kind of euphemism. A mass of Latin words falls upon the details like soft snow, blurring the outlines and covering up all the details" (263). Something is lost in translation. The narrator of *Smiley's People* tells us that "in Lacon's world direct questions were the height of bad taste but direct answers were worse" (49). Lacon's use of foreign expressions does not reflect a desire to find *la mot juste*; rather this is indicative of his particular "taste" for the truth.

Lacon's reliance upon proverbial expressions illustrates his tendency to promote (unconsciously or not) "unthink." He offers Smiley sugar for his tea, and must add the mindless assertion that "sugar replaces lost energy" (*SP* 44). He declares that "there was never a golden age. There's only a golden mean" (*SP* 48). Lacon, furthermore, speaks using the terms "axe-laying," "stock-taking," and other jargon more closely associated with the

"spook" trade like "honey-traps" and "coat-trailing." The effect is to take attention away from the actions and concentrate it on the words, but without thinking about the words too much, without assigning them too clear a meaning. If a murder becomes a liquidation it becomes much less of a moral dilemma. The Circus personnel using "laconic" metaphors do so not in the spirit of the Imagists, but to diffuse meaning and validate the indefensible, or at the very least, to forget about their actions. Again, Orwell manifests the problem of "mechanically repeating the familiar phrases": "a speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine . . . . he may almost be unconscious of what he is saying" (262). Lacon is a victim of the malaise of meaninglessness effecting those who must attempt to live and work in a social organisation devoid of meaningful acts, where tradition and purpose have been reduced to cant. "Lacon with his jerky gestures could only scratch about for words sufficiently elliptical to disguise his meaning" (*SP* 50).

For le Carré language is thought. It represents the degree of consideration given, or not given, to an action, to a belief, and to a way of life. The various dialects of the Circus world reveal the inability or the disinclination of many members of the espionage community to effectively

think upon the consequences of their actions. In the beginning there may have been the deed but it was quickly followed by the word. Spies need to verbalise, to rationalise and ultimately to deny much of the meaning that the act of spying signifies: "a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred, and schizophrenia" (Orwell 263).

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